

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 IO-13 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 OMB-01 NIC-01 EUR-25 OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00 A-01

SCS-03 SY-10 RSR-01 CU-04 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11

INR-10 LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 PM-07 H-03 L-03

NSC-10 PA-03 PRS-01 SS-15 /179 W
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5298

INFO DOD/DIA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 3794

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, PINS, MILI

SUBJECT: SITUATION TENSE IN WAKE OF PRATS' RESIGNATION

REF: SANTIAGO 3786

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT ALLENDE MET WITH CABINET, OTHER POLITICAL AND MILITARY FIGURES AUG 23 FOLLOWING PRATS' RESIGNATION. PRESIDENT PRAISED PRATS AND REJECTED CABINET'S RESIGNATION OFFER. HE ALSO ATTACHED CHAMBER RESOLUTION, AND PROMISED TO ANSWER IT WITHIN 48 HOURS. OPPOSITION-LED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS (FESES) HAVE SCHEDULED FRIDAY RALLY WHICH MIGHT PROVOKE VIOLENCE. POLICE REINFORCEMENTS HAVE MOVED INTO CITY. END SUMMARY.

2. CHILE ENDURED ANOTHER DAY OF INTENSE POLITICAL ACTIVITY AUG 23 AND PROSPECTS FOR AUG 24 INDICATE YET ANOTHER HEAVY DAY IN THE OFFING. LATE AFTERNOON RESIGNATION OF GEN. PRATS AS BOTH MINDEF AND ARMY CINC (REFTEL) PROMPTED AN INTENSE ROUND OF PRESIDENTIAL MEETINGS. IN ADDITION TO PRATS, ALLENDE ALSO
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MET, INDIVIDUALLY OR IN GROUPS, WITH ARMY GENERALS PICKERING,

PINOCHET, BENAVIDES AND SEPULVEDA, ADM. MONTERO, PCCH'S SECGEN VORVALAN, PS'SECGEN ALTAMIRANO AND PR'S SEN. SULE. AT EVENING SESSION, PRES. REJECTED PROFORMA RESIGNATIONS OF ALL CABINET MINISTERS. MEETING WITH ALLENDE DURING DAY AND APPARENTLY ALSO ATTENDING CABINET MEETING WAS FORMER MININTERIOR BRIONES. LATTER'S APPEARANCE FUELING SPECULATION THAT PRATS' EXIT FROM CABINET MIGHT SERVE AS OPPORTUNITY FOR HIS REENTRANCE.

3. PRESS QUOTES PRATS AS STATING UPON LEAVING THE MONEDA THAT HE RESIGNED SO AS NOT TO "DESTROY THE ARMY." PCCH-OWNED EL SIGLO ADDS THAT HE ALSO SAID THAT IT WAS A QUESTION EITHER OF HIS RESIGNATION OR THAT OF OTHER GENERALS; THE LATTER OPTION, ACCORDING TO PRATS VIA SIGLO, "WOULD ONLY HAVE SERVED TO PRECIPITATE A COUP." ARMY OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ISSUED RELEASE EVENING AUG 23 STATING THAT AFTER ACCEPTING PRATS' RESIGNATION PRES. IMMEDIATELY APPOINTED PINOCHET AS ARMY CINC. NAMING NEW MINDEF RUMORED FOR TODAY BUT GIVEN PAST GESTATION PERIODS FOR CABINET NOMINATIONS, THERE CAN BE NO ASSURANCE THAT IT WILL ACTUALLY TAKE PLACE.

4. AFTER CABINET MEETING PRES. ALLENDE EULOGIZED PRATS IN MONEDA BALCONY SPEECH TO UP YOUTHS. PRES. STATED PRATS' RESIGNATION DEMONSTRATED ONCE AGAIN HIS "DEEP SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND LOYALTY TO THE GOVT." PRES. ALSO ATTACKED CHAMBER RESOLUTION OF AUG 22 (SANTIAGO 3768) AND BEMOANED FACT THAT SOME DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS BEING USED AS TOOLS BY "FASCISTS" TO SET STAGE FOR COUP. UP PRESS PICKS UP SAME LINE AND HEADLINES PDC'S LENDING OF ITSELF TO "SEDITIONOUS" PURPOSES. STATEMENT ISSUED BY GOVT SECGEN AUG 23 CONDEMNS RESOLUTION AS "A CONSCIOUS OR UNCONSCIOUS ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE A MANTLE OF FALSE LEGALITY TO SUBSEQUENT ATTEMPTS TO OVERTHROW THE LEGITIMATELY CONSTITUTED GOVT." STATEMENT PROMISES A PUBLIC PRESIDENTIAL RESPONSE TO THE DECLARATION WITHIN 48 HOURS.

5. FEDERATION OF UP PARTIES ENDORSED CUT CALL FOR STATE OF ALERT AND ISSUED DECLARATION PLACING ITS MEMBERSHIP IN "PERMANENT MOBILIZATION" TO CONFRONT "GOLPE" PLOTS.

6. SANTIAGO TENSE AS OPPOSITION-LED FESES STUDENTS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN RALLY LATE MORNING AUG 24. MONDAY'S GUN BATTLE NEAR CONFIDENTIAL

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CONGRESS WHICH LEFT 6 JN MEMBERS WOUNDED STILL VERY MUCH IN PUBLIC MIND. THIS WILL BE FESES FIRST STREET APPEARANCE SINCE THE SERIOUS STREET BATTLES THAT PUNCTUATED THE APRIL-JUNE TENIENTE STRIKE. PRESS REPORTS THAT CARABINEROS HAVE BEEN MOVING REINFORCEMENTS INTO CITY, APPARENTLY AT ORDERS OF MINISTER OF INTERIOR LETELIER. MINEDUCATION LAST NIGHT ANNOUNCED STUDENTS RETURN TO CLASS AUG 27.

7. MERCHANTS AND PROFESSIONAL GUILDS IN NINE CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN PROVINCES STILL ON STRIKE. DRIVERS OF STATE-OWNED BUS LINE IN VALPARAISO HAVE GONE ON STRIKE, LEAVING THAT PROVINCE NEARLY DEVOID OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. TRUCK-OWNER LEADER LEON VILARIN VOLUNTARILY TURNED HIMSELF IN UPON READING IN PRESS OF A COURT SUMMONS AND WAS IMMEDIATELY RELEASED ON BOND AUG 23. VILARIN REPORTEDLY TOLD PRESS THAT MAJOR DIFFICULTY IN SETTLING STRIKE IS "LACK OF CONFIDENCE, NOT ONLY IN GOVT BUT ALSO IN UNIFORMED CABINET MINISTERS." VILARIN STATED HE CONTEMPLATING ADDING A 15TH DEMAND TO THE 14 ALREADY PRESENTED BY RODADO, WHICH WOULD MAKE IMPERATIVE THAT ALL STRIKE AGREEMENTS BE APPROVED BY CONGRESS AS LAWS.

8. COMMENT. RAPID PACE OF EVENTS LEAVING MANY CHILEANS BEWILDERED AND APPREHENSIVE. POSSIBILITY OF STREET VIOLENCE TODAY IS PALPABLE. POSITION OF ADM. MONTERO AS THE ONLY REMAINING CINC IN CABINET WOULD SEEM TO BE UNTENABLE AND MORE PRESSURE CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE EXERTED UPON HIM BY HIS OWN NAVY OFFICERS. RESIGNATION OF PRATS, COMING AS IT DOES IN WAKE OF RUIZ' DEPARTURE, MAKES CLEAR, AND NOT SURPRISINGLY SO, THAT PRES' PATCHWORK ATTEMPT OF AUG 9 TO BRING CINCS INTO CABINET HAS FAILED. WHAT IS NOT CLEAR AT THIS JUNCTURE, HOWEVER, IS HOW THE ABSENCE OF PRATS WILL AFFECT UNFOLDING EVENTS.
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